

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): Conductive metal particles formed from a metallic material selected from the group consisting of iron, nickel, cobalt and alloys thereof, having a number average particle diameter of 5 to 100  $\mu\text{m}$ , a BET specific surface area of  $0.01 \times 10^3$  to  $0.7 \times 10^3 \text{ m}^2/\text{kg}$ , a sulfur element content of at most 0.1% by mass, an oxygen element content of at most 0.5% by mass and a carbon element content of at most 0.1% by mass, wherein the coefficient of variation of the particle diameter is at most 50%, and the saturation magnetization of the particles is at least  $0.1 \text{ Wb/m}^2$ .

Claims 2-3 (Canceled).

Claim 4 (Original): Conductive composite metal particles obtained by coating the surfaces of the conductive metal particles according to Claim 1 with a high-conductive metal.

Claim 5 (Original): The conductive composite metal particles according to Claim 4, wherein the thickness  $t$  of the coating layer of the high-conductive metal, which is calculated out in accordance with the following numerical expression, is at least 10 nm:

$$t = [1/(S_w \cdot \rho)] \times [N/(1-N)]$$

wherein  $t$  is the thickness (nm) of the coating layer of the high-conductive metal,  $S_w$  is the BET specific surface area ( $\text{m}^2/\text{kg}$ ) of the conductive metal particles,  $\rho$  is a specific gravity ( $\text{kg}/\text{m}^3$ ) of the high-conductive metal, and  $N$  is a ratio of a weight of the coating layer of the high-conductive metal to a weight of the conductive composite metal particles.

Claim 6 (Original): The conductive composite metal particles according to Claim 5, wherein the high-conductive metal is gold.

Claim 7 (Original): The conductive composite metal particles according to Claim 5, wherein the content of the high-conductive metal in each surface layer portion of the conductive composite metal particles is at least 50% by mass.

Claim 8 (Original): The conductive composite metal particles according to Claim 5, wherein the BET specific surface area of the conductive composite metal particles is  $0.01 \times 10^3$  to  $0.7 \times 10^3 \text{ m}^2/\text{kg}$ .

Claim 9 (Original): The conductive composite metal particles according to Claim 8, wherein the composite metal particles are obtained by coating the surfaces of the conductive metal particles whose saturation magnetization is at least  $0.1 \text{ Wb/m}^2$  with the high-conductive metal, and the electric resistance value R as measured in the following manner is at most  $1 \Omega$ :

Electric resistance value:

A paste composition is prepared by kneading 0.6 g of the conductive composite metal particles with 0.8 g of liquid rubber, the paste composition is arranged between a pair of electrodes each having a diameter of 1 mm and arranged so as to be opposed to each other at a clearance of 0.5 mm, a magnetic field of 0.3 T is applied to this pair of electrodes, and the pair of electrodes are left to stand in this state until the electric resistance value between the pair of electrodes is stabilized, thereby measuring an electric resistance value at this time.

Claims 10-15 (Canceled).

Claim 16 (New): The conductive composite metal particles according to Claim 5, wherein the composite metal particles are obtained by coating the surfaces of the conductive metal particles whose saturation magnetization is at least  $0.1 \text{ Wb/m}^2$  with the high-conductive metal, and the electric resistance value R as measured in the following manner is at most  $1 \Omega$ :

Electric resistance value:

A paste composition is prepared by kneading 0.6 g of the conductive composite metal particles with 0.8 g of liquid rubber, the paste composition is arranged between a pair of electrodes each having a diameter of 1 mm and arranged so as to be opposed to each other at a clearance of 0.5 mm, a magnetic field of 0.3 T is applied to this pair of electrodes, and the pair of electrodes are left to stand in this state until the electric resistance value between the pair of electrodes is stabilized, thereby measuring an electric resistance value at this time.

Claim 17 (New): The conductive composite metal particles according to Claim 6, wherein the composite metal particles are obtained by coating the surfaces of the conductive metal particles whose saturation magnetization is at least  $0.1 \text{ Wb/m}^2$  with the high-conductive metal, and the electric resistance value R as measured in the following manner is at most  $1 \Omega$ :

Electric resistance value:

A paste composition is prepared by kneading 0.6 g of the conductive composite metal particles with 0.8 g of liquid rubber, the paste composition is arranged between a pair of electrodes each having a diameter of 1 mm and arranged so as to be opposed to each other at a clearance of 0.5 mm, a magnetic field of 0.3 T is applied to this pair of electrodes, and the pair of electrodes are left to stand in this state until the electric resistance value between the pair of electrodes is stabilized, thereby measuring an electric resistance value at this time.

Claim 18 (New): The conductive composite metal particles according to Claim 7, wherein the composite metal particles are obtained by coating the surfaces of the conductive metal particles whose saturation magnetization is at least  $0.1 \text{ Wb/m}^2$  with the high-conductive metal, and the electric resistance value R as measured in the following manner is at most  $1 \Omega$ :

Electric resistance value:

A paste composition is prepared by kneading 0.6 g of the conductive composite metal particles with 0.8 g of liquid rubber, the paste composition is arranged between a pair of electrodes each having a diameter of 1 mm and arranged so as to be opposed to each other at a clearance of 0.5 mm, a magnetic field of 0.3 T is applied to this pair of electrodes, and the pair of electrodes are left to stand in this state until the electric resistance value between the pair of electrodes is stabilized, thereby measuring an electric resistance value at this time.

DISCUSSION OF THE AMENDMENT

Claim 1 has been amended by incorporating the subject matter of Claims 2 and 3 therein, and by requiring that the particles be formed of a metallic material selected from a particular Markush group, as supported in the specification at the paragraph bridging pages 15 and 16. Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled. New Claims 16-18 have been added. These claims are analogous to Claim 9, but depend on Claims 5-7, respectively.

No new matter is believed to have been added by the above amendment. Claims 1, 4-9, and 16-18 are now pending in the application.